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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the differences in the perceptions of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students with respect to the effectiveness of selected student services in two-year colleges in Alabama. A survey instrument, requesting respondents to express their agreement or disagreement with 57 statements regarding registrar functions, financial aid and job placement, guidance and counseling, student activities, and special services, was completed at 36 of the 41 two-year colleges in the state. Of the 1,337 questionnaires administered, 1,094 or 81.8% were completed and returned. Study findings included the following: (1) administrators, student development practitioners, and students did not give significantly different ratings to registrar functions, financial aid and job placement, guidance and counseling, and special activities; (2) administrators and student development practitioners gave significantly lower ratings to special services than faculty and students; (3) faculty members perceived registrar functions less positively than student development practitioners, administrators, and students; and (4) students perceived the effectiveness of registrar functions, financial aid and job placement, student activities, and special services functions more negatively than administrators and student development practitioners. (UCM)

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AN ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AT PUBLIC COMMUNITY, JUNIOR, AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN ALABAMA

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An Assessment of Student Development Programs at Public Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges in Alabama

The decade of the 1980s has revealed a new environment for higher education. As a result of taxpayer revolts, declining enrollments, technological changes, fiscal pressures, and extended services to nontraditional students, greater accountability for all higher education programs has become a necessity. Higher education administrators are evaluating existing programs and services. "Both academic curriculum and student personnel services must be examined and decisions made concerning which programs should be eliminated, which should be substantially reduced and which should remain unchanged" (Nelson & Murphy, 1980, p. 3). According to Dassance (1984), "the reassessment has begun in earnest and the reactions of a number of institutions have been to deemphasize the role of student personnel services" (p. 25). The growth years of the 1960s and 1970s are history. Improvement of institutional services and programs will be of high priority in the remainder of the decade. The need for research and evaluation is essential.

The student development program is an integral part of the total educational program of the institution which it serves. It is important to decision-making that the student development services and programs be periodically evaluated. The scope and level of effectiveness of programs and services must be assessed (Robinson, 1962; Shaffer, 1984; Creamer, 1985; Brown, 1986).

Research revealed that student development programs have little historical basis in evaluating services. In research conducted by Tullar (1979), several methods and instruments were found for evaluating individual student services but "no formalized procedures with which to evaluate overall community college services programs" (p. 3). Robinson (1962) stated that "it is axiomatic that dynamic programs of higher education require constant evaluation. Many college student personnel workers have long recognized this, but little evidence exists that recognition has been followed by action" (p. 189).

Very limited research in relation to analyzing student development programs exists in the two-year colleges in Alabama. Research indicated two studies that involved selected junior colleges in Alabama (Hughes, 1975, and Tomlinson, 1977). The need for an evaluation of existing programs was obvious.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to analyze the differences that existed in the perceptions of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students as to the effectiveness of selected student services in two-year colleges in Alabama. The specific research question for this investigation was: do administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students differ in ratings of the registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, student activities functions,

and special services functions when measures are taken in combination?

Hypotheses

Six null hypotheses were developed from the research question. The hypotheses, stated in null form, were as follows:

1. There is no significant difference between the ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students on a linear combination of registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, student activities functions, and special services functions.

2. There is no significant difference between the ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students regarding the effectiveness of registrar functions.

3. There is no significant difference between the ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students regarding the effectiveness of financial aid and job placement functions.

4. There is no significant difference between the ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students regarding the effectiveness of guidance and counseling functions.

5. There is no significant difference between the ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students regarding the effectiveness of student activities functions.

6. There is no significant difference between the ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students regarding the effectiveness of special services functions.

Setting

The study was conducted in public institutions of the Alabama College System. The system is composed of 14 junior colleges, 7 community colleges, 20 technical colleges, 1 upper-division college, and an industrial training institute (State Department of Postsecondary Education, 1987). For the purposes of this study, the upper-division college and the industrial training institution were omitted. Thirty-nine institutions consented to participate in the study. The survey was completed by 36 institutions; thus, 92.3% of the agreeing institutions completed the survey.

Sample

The sample of this study consisted of selected administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students at participating institutions in the Alabama College System. The administrator group included all employees whose assignment required management responsibility of the institution. This group included those persons holding such titles as president, assistant to the president, or dean. Those who were employed to perform services referred to as student services composed the student development practitioner group.

Administrators whose assignment required responsibility for management of the student development program were included in this group. The faculty group consisted of those whose task was to provide instruction. The fourth group, students, included those persons registered for credit courses. A restriction that students be in their second quarter or beyond in attendance at the institution was imposed in order that they would have had an opportunity to participate in the student service program.

The Survey Instrument

The instrument used to collect data for this study was an adaptation of an interview opinionnaire developed by Tullar (1979) at the University of Arizona in a dissertation entitled Procedures for Evaluating Student Services in Community Colleges. His opinionnaire was designed to assess the perceptions of student services held by administrators, student affairs practitioners, faculty, and students.

Each item of the opinionnaire was developed to gather information pertaining to the five basic administrative functions of a student development program. Respondents to the adapted questionnaire were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 57 statements pertaining to student development services.

Instrument Reliability

The adapted instrument was tested for reliability by using the internal consistency method. According to Ferguson (1981),

"if the items on a test have high intercorrelations with each other and are measure of much the same attribute, then the reliability coefficient will be high" (p. 439). A reliability coefficient for each function (registrar, financial aid and job placement, guidances and counseling, student activities, and special services) was established. The alpha reliability coefficients ranged from .80 to .86 for the dependent measures. Thus, the instrument contained acceptable reliability for subjects in this study. Reliability coefficients for each function are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Data Collection

The data for the study were collected during the 1986-87 academic year. The necessary data were obtained from three sources: (a) the Department of Postsecondary Education, (b) participating institutions, and (c) the survey instrument. The Department of Postsecondary Education provided name and current mailing address for each institution in the Alabama College System. Participating institutions provided names of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students that met criteria to be included in the study. The survey instrument was used to collect the remainder of the data needed for the investigation.

Survey Responses

In response to 1337 questionnaires distributed to administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students, 1094 or 81.8% were completed and returned. Group responses are shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

All administrators and student development practitioners at each participating institution were included in the investigation. A sample of faculty and students approximately 40% larger than required for analysis was selected to obtain the number of subjects predetermined for the study. Therefore, the first 14 names randomly selected from each group were chosen to participate in the study. A maximum of 10 faculty and 10 students from each participating institution was used in the study. Only 4 institutions returned fewer than 10 questionnaires for faculty. Two institutions returned fewer than 10 student questionnaires. When more than 10 completed questionnaires were returned from an institution for faculty and student groups, a number was assigned to each and a table of random numbers was used to select 10. Totals for each responding group that were used in the analysis are shown in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Analysis of Data

Responses to the questionnaire were coded and analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences-X (Norusis, 1985). The coded values were as follows: (a) completely agree = 1, (b) substantially agree = 2, (c) somewhat agree = 3, (d) unknown/undecided = 4, (e) somewhat disagree = 5, (f) substantially disagree = 6, and (g) completely disagree = 7.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test simultaneous differences among the four groups (administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students) on the dependent variables (registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, student activities functions, and special services functions). The first hypothesis of no group differences on the dependent variables in combination was tested by using the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) procedure. When a significant difference was disclosed by the MANOVA technique, univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was employed to investigate group differences for each dependent variable (Hypotheses 2-6). Because the administrator, student development practitioner, faculty, and student groups contained unequal sample sizes, the Scheffé post hoc procedure was used to denote where significant differences disclosed by the univariate tests existed.

Findings of Study

The null hypotheses were tested through application of statistical methods. A significant multivariate F ratio for Hypothesis 1 had to be obtained to allow interpretation of the univariate analysis of variance for each of the remaining hypotheses. A multivariate test of significance for Hypothesis 1 was conducted in order to determine effects of independent variables on a linear combination of dependent measures. The resulting Wilks' lambda was .943, $F(15,2642) = 3.786$, $p<.001$. Thus, significant differences were found to exist between ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students on a linear combination of the five dependent variables (registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, student activities functions, and special services functions). Univariate analysis for each of the remaining hypotheses was conducted.

A univariate analysis of variance test for each of the dependent variables revealed a statistically significant difference between the ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students on each of the variables (see Table 4). Thus, Hypotheses 2-6 were rejected.

Insert Table 4 about here

The Scheffé post hoc comparisons for groups on perceived effectiveness of each variable revealed that there were

significant differences in ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students as to the effectiveness of student development services on the measures of registrar functions, guidance and counseling functions, student activities functions, and special services functions. Faculty member mean scores were higher (more negative) than administrator, student development practitioner, and student mean scores on the variables of registrar functions, guidance and counseling functions, student activities functions, and special services functions. Even though a significant *F* ratio for the dependent measure financial aid and job placement was revealed by the ANOVA procedure, the Scheffe' test failed to identify significant differences at the .05 level among the means. The Scheffe' is a very conservative test when used at the .05 level. Administrator, student development practitioner, and student mean scores did not differ significantly on variables of registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, and special activities functions. Administrator and student development practitioner mean scores did differ significantly from student and faculty mean scores on the variable of special services functions. Administrator and student development practitioner mean scores were lower (more positive) than student and faculty mean scores. Means and standard deviations according to groups for dependent variables are shown in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here

Some generalizations regarding the findings of this study can be related to several studies reviewed in the literature. Research findings of Gutch (1961), Pennington (1970), Emerson (1971), Matson (1972), Hughes (1975), Tomlinson (1977), and Shade (1983) revealed that student development programs are identifiable, well established, and recognized as having importance in two-year colleges. However, the studies indicated that student services functions were not being implemented satisfactorily in the majority of the colleges. The findings of the present study revealed that the majority of the student personnel functions as listed by Raines (1966), Collins (1967), Monroe (1972), McConnell (1965), Tullar (1979), and Cohen and Brawer (1982) are identifiable and well established in the two-year institutions of Alabama. An analysis of the data in this study indicated that student services are implemented satisfactorily in the majority of the participating institutions. Each of the five student development functions received positive ratings from administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students when ratings were combined for analysis. These findings are in contrast to previous studies conducted in selected two-year colleges in Alabama (Hughes, 1975; Tomlinson, 1977). Hughes and Tomlinson found that student personnel services were not implemented satisfactorily in the majority of institutions in their studies. The functions of career

information, job placement services, student activities, and guidance and counseling were all rated low in effectiveness by respondents. Tomlinson's study revealed that only two of the six colleges studied received positive ratings for the effectiveness of student services.

Administrators' and student development practitioners' perceptions of the effectiveness of student development services were very similar in this study. The data reinforce Shades' (1983) conclusion that administrative personnel hold similar views regarding the effectiveness of student personnel programs.

Pinsky and Marks (1980) established that administrators and faculty members perceived student development program quality to be more positive than did students. This discovery is inconsistent with the findings of the current study. The effectiveness of student development services was rated more positively by administrators, student development practitioners, and students than by faculty members on each of the five functions.

An interpretative analysis of the questionnaire used in this study indicated that a high percentage of "unknown/undecided" responses was evident among students and faculty members for several of the student development services. Studies by Singh (1974), Culp (1981), Lewicki and Thompson (1982), and Neal and Heppner (1986) also revealed that a large percentage of students and faculty is unaware of student development services.

As reported previously, the univariate analysis of variance test for each of the dependent variables (registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, special activities functions, and special services functions) revealed significant differences between the ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students on each of the measures in this study. Tullar's (1979) findings revealed that significant differences existed between the responses of the population components for the functions of guidance and counseling, student activities, and special services. However, his findings for the registrar and financial aid and job placement functions revealed no significant differences in responses between administrators, student development practitioners, faculty, and students. In the present study a contrast was shown in which there were significant differences in the responses for all student service functions.

Conclusions

As a result of the statistical analyses, the following conclusions relative to the purpose of this study are presented:

1. The effectiveness ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty members, and students in the Alabama College System differed significantly on a linear combination of registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, student activities functions, and special services functions.

2. Significant differences between the effectiveness ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty members, and students regarding the dependent measures of registrar functions, financial aid and job placement, guidance and counseling functions, student activities functions, and special services functions were revealed by the univariate analysis of variance test.

3. Student development practitioners, administrators, and students perceived the effectiveness of the registrar functions significantly lower (more positive) than did faculty members. However, student development practitioner, administrator, and student ratings did not differ significantly from one another.

4. No significant differences between the effectiveness ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, faculty members, and students regarding the dependent measure financial aid and job placement functions was revealed by the Scheffe' test. There was a significant difference in the results of the ANOVA test.

5. Faculty members perceived effectiveness of the guidance and counseling functions higher (more negative) than did student development practitioners and students. Administrator, student development practitioner, and student ratings of effectiveness did not differ significantly. Effectiveness ratings between faculty members and administrators did not differ significantly.

6. Administrators rated the perceived effectiveness of the special activities functions lower (more positive) than did

faculty members. The ratings of administrators, student development practitioners, and students did not differ significantly.

7. Students and faculty perceived the effectiveness of special services functions higher (more negative) than did administrators and student development practitioners. The ratings of administrators and student development practitioners did not differ significantly. There was also no significant difference in the ratings of faculty members and students.

8. Administrators perceived the effectiveness of financial aid and job placement functions, student activities functions, and special services functions lower (more positive) than did student development practitioners, faculty members, and students.

9. Student development practitioners perceived the effectiveness of registrar functions and guidance and counseling functions lower (more positive) than did administrators, faculty members, and students.

10. Faculty members perceived the effectiveness of registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, special activities functions, and special services functions higher (more negative) than did administrators, student development practitioners, and students.

11. Students perceived the effectiveness of registrar functions, financial aid and job placement functions, guidance and counseling functions, special activities functions, and special services functions higher (more negative) than did

administrators and student development practitioners. They also rated all functions lower (more positive) than did faculty members.

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Table 1

Coefficient Alpha Internal Consistency Reliability of Survey Instrument

Function	Item numbers	Alpha
Registrar	1-14	.82
Financial aid and job placement	15-24	.81
Guidance and counseling	25-35	.86
Student activities	36-39	.80
Special services	40-57	.86

Table 2

Number and Percentages of Administrators, Student Development Practitioners, Faculty, and Students Participating in Study

Group	Number distributed	Number responding	Percentage responding
Administrators	137	113	82.5%
Stud. dev. pract.	192	149	77.6%
Faculty	504	402	79.8%
Students	504	430	85.3%
Total	1337	1094	81.8%

Table 3

Number and Percentages of Administrators, Student Development Practitioners, Faculty, and Student Questionnaires Used for Analysis

Group	Number responding	Number used	Percentages
Administrators	113	113	100.0%
Stud. dev. pract.	149	149	100.0%
Faculty	402	349	86.8%
Students	430	354	82.3%
Totals	1094	965	88.2%

Table 4

ANOVA Summary Table for Dependent Variables

Source	df	Sum of squares	Mean square	F ratio
Registrar functions				
Between groups	3	2560.7960	853.5987	7.77***
Within groups	961	105523.4486	109.8059	
Total	964	108084.2446		
Financial aid and job placement functions				
Between groups	3	820.2568	273.4189	3.63*
Within groups	961	72449.3245	75.3895	
Total	964	73269.5813		
Guidance and counseling functions				
Between groups	3	2956.0418	985.3473	9.78***
Within groups	961	96785.0359	100.7128	
Total	964	99741.0777		
Student activities functions				
Between groups	3	407.1920	135.7307	4.81**
Within groups	961	27101.5790	28.2014	
Total	964	27508.7710		

(table continues)

Source	df	Sum of squares	Mean square	F ratio
Special services functions				
Between groups	3	6910.6731	2303.5577	9.38***
Within groups	961	235971.5508	245.5479	
Total	964	242882.2238		

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations According to Groups for Dependent Variables

Group	Mean	Standard deviation
Registrar functions		
Administrators	32.38	8.83
Stud. dev. pract.	31.45	8.35
Faculty	35.89	10.51
Students	33.65	11.66
Financial aid and job placement functions		
Administrators	25.64	7.79
Stud. dev. pract.	26.29	8.64
Faculty	28.26	8.49
Students	27.69	9.14
Guidance and counseling functions		
Administrators	27.31	9.34
Stud. dev. pract.	25.38	8.59
Faculty	30.26	9.53
Students	27.44	11.23

(table continues)

Group	Mean	Standard deviation
	Student activities functions	
Administrators	9.65	4.65
Stud. dev. pract	10.01	5.94
Faculty	11.46	5.16
Students	10.52	5.38
	Special services functions	
Administrators	49.32	12.66
Stud. dev. pract.	49.61	13.39
Faculty	56.05	16.22
Students	54.67	16.83

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